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## CHRISTMAS DAY

From J.H. Blunt's *Annotated Book of Common Prayer*,  
revised with reference to the Liturgy of St. Tikhon.

**T**HE Festival of Christmas was observed at a very early period in the Church, as indeed it could but hardly be; for that which brought the joy of angels within reach of men's ears, could not but have been devoutly and joyously remembered by Christians, year by year, when they came fully to understand the greatness of this event. St. Chrysostom, in a Christmas homily, speaks of the festival as being even then, in the fourth century, one of great antiquity; and, in an Epistle, mentions that Julius I. [A.D. 337-352] had caused strict inquiry to be made, and had confirmed the observance of it on December 25th. There are sermons extant which were preached upon this day by SS. Gregory Nazianzen and Basil, in the same century. It is spoken of by Clemens Alexandrinus, who died in the beginning of the third century, a little more than a hundred years after the death of St. John; and it was on Christmas Day that a whole church full of martyrs was burnt by Maximin, in Nicomedia.

In the primitive age of the Church, this Festival was more closely associated with the Epiphany than it has been in later times. The actual Nativity of Christ was considered as His first Manifestation, and the name "Theophania" was sometimes given to the day on which it was commemorated, as well as to the twelfth day after-

wards, when the end of the Christmas Festival is celebrated with other memorials of the appearance of God among men. Most of the Fathers have left sermons which were preached on Christmas Day, or during the continuance of the festival; and secular decrees of the Christian Emperors, as well as Canons of the Church, show that it was very strictly observed as a time of rest from labour, of Divine Worship, and of Christian hilarity.

The ancient Church of England welcomed Christmas Day with a special service on the Vigil, a celebration of the Holy Communion soon after

midnight, another at early dawn, and a third at the usual hour of the mid-day mass. The first two of these services were omitted from the Prayer Book of 1549, and the third from that of 1552. [ED: Note, that two Communion services are provided for in the 1928 American Book of Common Prayer, and all three have been restored to the English Rite in the Antiochian Orthodox Western Rite.] The midnight celebration commemorates the actual Birth of our Lord; the early morning one its revelation to mankind in the persons of the shepherds; that at mid-day the Eternal Sonship of the Holy Child Jesus.



The Collect at the Early Communion in the first Prayer Book was that of Christmas Eve in the Salisbury Missal: the Epistle and Gospel being the first of the ancient three.

It is most fit that the season so marked out by Angels by songs of joy, such as had not been heard on earth since the Creation, should also be observed as a time of festive gladness by the Church, and in the social life of Christians. Christ Himself instituted this festival when He sanctified the day by then first revealing His Human Nature to the eyes of mankind. The holy Angels witnessed to its separation for ever as a day of days, where



they proclaimed the Glory that was then offered to God in the Highest by the restoration of perfect Manhood in the Virgin-born Jesus; and the peace that was brought among men on earth through the reunion of their nature to God. The whole world has since recognized it as the single point of history in which every age, every country, every living man has an interest. It is to the Nativity of our Lord that all the pages of the Bible point as the centre on which every thing there recorded turns. Kings have lived and died; empires have arisen and crumbled away; great cities have been built and destroyed; countries peopled and again laid desert: and all this is to us almost as if it had never been. Great as past events of history were to the generations in which they occurred, to us they are of less practical importance than the every-day circumstances of our common life. But the event which gives us the festival of Christmas was one whose interest is universal and unfading: one with which we are as much concerned as were the shepherds of Bethlehem: and which will be of no less importance to the last generation of men than it is to us. For it was in the Birth of Christ that Earth was reunited to Heaven, and both made one Kingdom of God above and below, as they were at the first Creation. In it, separation of man from God was done away, for One appeared Who in His own single Person was God, belonging to Heaven, and Man, belonging to earth. It was not only the beginning of a new era, but it was the Centre of all human history, the point of time to which the ages that were gone had looked forward, and to which the ages that were to come after must all look back; the one day of days which gathered all other times into itself, said stretching its influence through every hour of human existence from the Fall to the Judgment, makes for itself a history by connexion with which only can other histories have an eternal interest. And so, even beyond the immediate influence of the Church, it is found that the Christmas gladness of the Church is



reflected in the world around: and a common instinct of regenerated human nature teaches that world to recognize in Christmas a season of unity and fellowship and goodwill, of happiness and peace.

The position of the three days after Christmas Day is a very remarkable one. Easter and Pentecost

each have two festive days following their principal day, the Sunday: and in this respect Christmas, with its three festive days, is placed on a similar though a more honoured footing. But at Easter and Pentecost the days are connected by name with the festival itself, whereas at Christmas, they are associated with the

names of Saints, in addition to that continued commemoration of the Nativity which belongs to them as to the other days of the Octave.

Some explanation of this may be found in the vivid convictions of the early Church respecting the close union between Christ and His people, especially His Martyrs, through the virtue of the Incarnation. Eusebius [viii. 10] speaks of the martyrs of Alexandria as *Christoforoï*, a name otherwise familiar to us in the story of St. Christopher, and in the appellation of Theophorus which was given by himself or others to Ignatius: and St. Augustine, in one of his Sermons on St. Stephen's Day, seems to adopt a strain of thought in accordance with these names, when he says, "As Christ by being born was brought into union with Stephen, so Stephen by dying was brought into union with Christ." There was, moreover, in the early Church (itself so familiar with a life of suffering) a profound sense of the continuous martyrdom which was involved in the earthly life of our Lord, both from the intensity of the humiliation which He underwent in becoming Man [*non horruisti virginis uterum. Te Deum*], and also from the sorrows which were inherent in His human nature as the bearer of all human woes. Hence they could not lose sight in those days of the fact that the Holy Child of Bethlehem was also the



St. Mark's Parish of Denver  
*The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*  
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The Rev'd. John Charles Connely, Rector

November 2001

Dear St. Mark's Parishioners:

Thank you for a year in which you have proven generous in support of the monasteries, orphanages, overseas missions, OCMC, IOCC, Archdiocesan appeals, camp scholarships, and our own parochial icon fund. Thank you for contributions adequate to fund our debt reduction on top of the normal operating costs of this parish Church.

There is no more effective means of bringing the light of the Gospel to a darkened world than planting churches. The very existence of St. Mark's in the middle of Denver, Colorado in the least 'religiously affiliated' neighborhood in the whole State, is miraculous. I thank God for all of you who participate in the Sunday and week day prayers, the classes, the guilds, the choir, the Bookstore, the publishing projects, fund raisers for charities, and the maintenance and improvement of our buildings. Since we are blessed with this much talent, and a fine facility, it appears to me that the parish could sustain as much as a 50% growth in the number of families without undo stress on the staff or the meeting space. This assumes adding one or two Church School classes and use of the courtyard for overflow since we are already packed out in the Parish Hall for suppers. Please pray and think on ways to let others know what a great church we have, by the grace of the Holy and Undivided Trinity.

As you know, this time of year we ask all the faithful to make a financial pledge to St. Mark's to support the mission and ministries of the Parish and the Archdiocese. Pledge cards will be available.

Yours in Christ,

*Fr. John*

Telephone 303-722-0707

If you agree that the Christian warrior Saints deserve iconic representation at St. Mark's, please consider a contribution to the Icon Fund. Courage in the face of the professed enemies of Christ has rarely been so obviously needed as in these days following the murderous assaults of September 11th. Personal and professional sacrifices may be asked. There will be an Icon Fundraiser luncheon at St. Mark's on Epiphany Sunday, 6 January, at 11:30 AM. All are welcome. Please sign up in the Parish Hall.

Thanks to Jeff Stout for this photograph of the St. George Icon written by Mary Sullivan Coit for the Greenlee family icon corner.





# December 2001

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat



Judith T., Mat. Deborah, Roz (Sophia) R., hosted the Orthodox anniversary and Icon Fund Luncheon November 11th. Thanks to your response, the three Warrior Icons were purchased for the Church and guard our west wall. We would like to add St. George (like that commissioned by the Greenlees). A luncheon is planned for 6 January, Sunday.

1

7:30 AM Mass  
6:00 PM Evensong  
Feria

2

7:30 AM Morning Prayer  
8:00 AM Mass  
9:10 AM Church School  
10:00 AM Mass  
4:00 PM Evensong  
Advent I

3

Feria

4

5:00 PM Evensong  
7:00 PM Mass  
7:35 PM -8:35 PM Great Church Class

5

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
Feria

6

7:00 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
St. Nicholas

7

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
St. Ambrose of Milan

8

7:30 AM Mass  
6:00 PM Evensong  
Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

9

7:30 AM Morning Prayer  
8:00 AM Mass  
9:10 AM Church School  
10:00 AM Mass  
4:00 PM Evensong  
Advent II

10

Feria

11

5:00 PM Evensong  
7:00 PM Mass  
7:35 PM -8:35 PM Great Church Class

12

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
Feria

13

7:00 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
St. Lucy

14

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
Feria

15

9:00 AM Mass  
10:00 AM Mary & Martha Class  
6:00 PM Evensong  
Feria

16

7:30 AM Morning Prayer  
8:00 AM Mass  
9:10 AM Church School  
10:00 AM Mass  
4:00 PM Evensong  
Advent III (Rose)

17

O Sapientia  
St. Lazarus

18

5:00 PM Evensong  
Feria  
O Adonai

19

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
Ember Wednesday (fast)  
O Radix Jesse

20

7:00 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
Feria  
O Clavis David

21

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
O Oriens  
St. Thomas Apostle

22

7:30 AM Mass  
6:00 PM Evensong  
O Rex gentium

23

7:30 AM Morning Prayer  
8:00 AM Mass  
9:10 AM Church School  
10:00 AM Mass  
4:00 PM Evensong  
Advent IV

24

5:00 PM Choral Service  
10:30 PM Carols  
11:00 PM Midnight Mass  
Christmass Eve

25

10:00 AM Mass  
  
Christmass Day

26

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
St. Stephen

27

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
St. John Evangelist

28

7:30 AM Mass  
5:00 PM Evensong  
The Holy Innocents

29

7:30 AM Mass  
6:00 PM Evensong  
Octave of Nativity

30

7:30 AM Morning Prayer  
8:00 AM Mass  
9:10 AM Church School  
10:00 AM Mass  
4:00 PM Evensong

31

5:00 PM Evensong  
St. Sylvester I, Pope & Confessor





Man of Sorrows: and it is very probable that this view of our Lord's Incarnation led to the commemoration of the first Martyr who suffered on the day succeeding that on which his Master had entered on a life of suffering, rather than on the anniversary of his martyrdom. In connexion with this view it is very observable, that at the first taste of martyrdom, even before the suffering of St. Stephen, the Church pleaded the Divine Sonship and human Infancy of our Lord: and although few of the Apostles are likely to have known their Lord in His childhood, (while His mature years and His final work were familiar to all, and His Ascent out of their sight as Man vividly fresh in their memory,) yet they speak of Him to the Father in their hour of trouble as "Thy holy Child Jesus," and seem thus to fall back, so to speak, on the first days of the Incarnation more than a third of a century before, rather than on their recent knowledge of Him through whom they prayed for strength to do and bear all that was set before them. It may well have been that St. Stephen was among them when the words of that prayer were used.

Another explanation is to be found in the Rationale of Durandus [vii. 42]. The substance of this is, that Christ being the Head to which all the members are joined, three kinds of members are joined to Him by martyrdom: as mystically signified in the Song of Songs [v. 10], by the words, "My Beloved is white and ruddy, and the chiefest among ten thousand." The first and chief order of martyrs be thus considers to be those who, being baptized in blood, suffered both in will and deed: the second, those who gave their will up entirely to suffer, but yet escaped with life, and so accomplished a white martyrdom: the third, those who suffered but had no wills of their own to sacrifice to God, as was the case with the Holy Innocents.

One other view may be named; which is, that as the second half of the Christian year represents the Christian life founded on the life of Christ, so the three days after Christmas represent the three ways of suffering, love, and purity, by which the Incarnation bears fruit in the saints of God. St. Stephen was the nearest to the King of Saints in His life of suffering, St. John in His life of love, the Holy Innocents in His life of purity. The first trod immediately in his Master's footsteps of a Martyr death in its most perfect form; the second lying on Jesus'

bosom in close communion with Him to the end of His earthly life, followed Him closely ever after in His heavenly example; the third were the first-fruits of that holy train whose innocence and purity admits them nearest to the Person of their glorified Redeemer, so that "they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." §

Dear Fr. John,

The dinner for OCMC in Nov. was very successful. It is remarkable for being the first event that was held by RMOCCM (Rocky Mountain Orthodox Christian...). We were able to send a check of \$3650 to OCMC, all of which is the proceeds from the dinner. Also, RMOCCM was able to send over \$30,000 to the IOCC Sept. 11 fund, which was collected from parishes in the Rocky Mountain region. I am glad that St. Mark's was a part of all this, being a part of Orthodox community. It's incredible what we can do when all us get together.

I wanted to thank you for your help and thank everybody at St. Mark's.

Sincerely, *Judith Toshihara*



Matushka Deborah and Matushka Masha at the OCMC dinner. They independently found the same dress/pearls combination.

Dr. Max and Bebe Greenlee admire St. George being written for them by Mary Sullivan Coit.



The e-mail discussion list, Occidentalis, is no longer sponsored by the WR Deanery of the Central States. An entity in Texas styled 'Milan Synod' immediately adopted the name of the list and now gives out advice to hundreds of inquirers regarding the Orthodox Western Rite.

The Texas MS is not associated with our Archdiocese. The Occidentalis List was started to encourage inquirers and the Western Rite faithful by inviting questions and providing information regarding the WR in the Antiochian Church. Beginning about July this year the List was randomly hijacked by critics who published their own views. Among the doctrines presented: Those who serve the Liturgy in English are spiritual sons of Archbishop Thos. Cranmer; Latin is not a language capable of theological truth; the real enemies of the WR are places like St. Mark's because they serve so poorly, so ethnically; there would be thousands of Germans and Belgians and Chinese in the WR if it were not for convert Anglicans suffocating them, etc., etc.



A page sample from the new St. Ambrose Hymnal for Western Rite Parishes. \$15 plus \$ 4.00 P/H from St. Mark's.

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